

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 CAIRO 18770 01 OF 02 111317Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00
PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01
SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 ACDA-12 TRSE-00 OMB-01 SAA-01
SSM-03 SES-02 NEAE-00 HA-05 /123 W
-----044107 111332Z /45

P 111304Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2498
INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI
AMEMBASSY DOHA
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY MANAMA
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY MUSCAT
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
AMEMBASSY TUNIS
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 CAIRO 18770

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PORG EG XF
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SECRET

PAGE 02 CAIRO 18770 01 OF 02 111317Z

SUBJECT: ARAB INFIGHTING OVER VENUE OF ARAB LEAGUE
- MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

REF: KHARTOUM 3667 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY. EGYPTIANS BELIEVE NUMEIRY'S PROPOSAL TO HOLD
SEPTEMBER ARAB LEAGUE MINISTERIAL IN KHARTOUM RATHER THAN

CAIRO WAS STIMULATED BY SYRIANS AND, AT LEAST TACITLY, BY SAUDIS. THEY ARE CONSIDERING REFUSING TO AGREE TO CHANGED VENUE, FORESEEING DIFFICULT PROBLEMS IF MEETING TAKES PLACE IN KHARTOUM WITH SYRIA IN THE CHAIR. SPECIFICALLY, EGYPTIANS BELIEVE THEY HAVE BETTER CHANCE OF MODERATING TWO ISSUES IF THEY ARE IN THE CHAIR: (A) SPECIAL SESSIONS ON PALESTINE, AND (B) PLO-INTRODUCED ITEM ON "U.S. DISRUPTIVE POLICIES IN THE MIDDLE EAST." END SUMMARY.

1. EGYPTIAN PERM REP TO ARAB LEAGUE TAHSIN BASHIR DESCRIBED TO EGY DIRECTOR MARTHINSON AND POLCOUNS AUGUST 11 THE CONSIDERABLE INFIGHTING THAT IS TAKING PLACE BETWEEN EGYPT AND "REJECTIONIST" ARABS OVER THE VENUE OF SEPTEMBER ARAB LEAGUE MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE. BASHIR SAID EGYPT HAD NOT BEEN CONSULTED BY SUDAN ON PROPOSED CHANGE OF LOCATION. THERE HAD BEEN HINTS AT BELGRADE NON-ALIGNED CONFERENCE THAT SOME REJECTIONIST COUNTRIES WHICH PLANNED TO BOYCOTT ARAB LEAGUE MINISTERIAL IF HELD IN CAIRO HAD AGREED TO ATTEND IF KHARTOUM WERE THE SITE. EGYPTIANS GOT THE MESSAGE THAT IT WOULD BE NICE IF THEY BOWED OUT IN THE INTEREST OF ARAB SOLIDARITY, BUT THEY WERE NOT FORMALLY CONSULTED. BASHIR SAID HIS GOVERNMENT VIEWED THE PROPOSED MOVE TO KHARTOUM AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE GROWING ARAB CAMPAIGN TO ISOLATE EGYPT AND FORCE HER TO ABANDON DIRECT SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 CAIRO 18770 01 OF 02 111317Z

CONTACTS WITH ISRAEL. HE WAS PARTICULARLY ANNOYED AT NUMEIRY, WHO HE BELIEVED WOULD NOT HAVE MOVED WITHOUT ACTIVE OR TACIT SAUDI SUPPORT. THE SAUDIS, HE WENT ON, HAVE NO IDEA WHAT IS TO BE ACHIEVED BY "ARAB UNITY," AND THEIR RECENT SCURRYING ABOUT IN THAT CAUSE HAS BEEN MOST UNHELPFUL.

2. BASHIR SAID FONMIN KAMEL WAS RIGHT NOW CONSIDERING WHETHER TO INSIST THAT THE CONFERENCE TAKE PLACE IN CAIRO AS PLANNED--MINUS THE REJECTIONISTS--OR TO ACQUIESCE IN KHARTOUM AS THE SITE. A MAJOR CONSIDERATION WOULD IN HIS VIEW BE EGYPT'S LESSENERED ABILITY TO SHAPE THE OUTCOME OF THE CONFERENCE IN KHARTOUM SINCE THE CHAIR THERE WOULD BE SYRIA'S RATHER THAN EGYPT'S. (AS CURRENT ARAB LEAGUE PRESIDENT, SYRIA WOULD CHAIR THE CONFERENCE IF SHE ATTENDED; IN HER ABSENCE, AS AT CAIRO, THIS RESPONSIBILITY WOULD FALL TO THE HOST.) NORMALLY, BASHIR SAID, CHAIRING AN ARAB LEAGUE MEETING HAS LITTLE IMPORTANCE. HOWEVER, IN THIS CASE EGYPT WAS ANXIOUS TO TONE DOWN CERTAIN DECISIONS THAT EMERGED FROM BELGRADE, NOTABLY THE RECOMMENDATION FOR A SPECIAL UNGA SESSION ON PALESTINE. SINCE THIS IDEA WAS SYRIA'S, AND ITS POINT W

WAS TO FOCUS ATTENTION ON EGYPT'S "SELL-OUT" OF THE PALESTINIANS, EGYPT'S OBJECT WAS TO ENSURE THAT NO DECISIONS WERE TAKEN THAT WOULD MAKE A SPECIAL SESSION INEVITABLE. (BASHIR REMARKED THAT THERE WAS IN ANY CASE CLEARLY NO OPPORTUNITY FOR A SPECIAL SESSION UNTIL EARLY 1979.) ANOTHER ITEM THAT EGYPT FELT IT WOULD BE BETTER ABLE TO MODERATE IN CAIRO WAS A PLO-INTRODUCED ITEM ENTITLED (APPROXIMATELY) "U.S. DISRUPTIVE POLICIES IN THE MIDDLE EAST." SINCE THIS WAS AIMED AT EGYPT AS MUCH AS THE U.S., BASHIR SAID IT WAS CLEARLY IN EGYPT'S INTEREST TO SEE THAT IT WAS NOT MADE A CENTERPIECE

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SECRET

PAGE 01 CAIRO 18770 02 OF 02 111320Z
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S E C R E T SECTION 02 OF 02 CAIRO 18770

AT THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY. (WE SAID WE COULDN'T AGREE
MORE. WE ADDED THAT ANOTHER MULTILATERAL ISSUE THAT
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SECRET

PAGE 02 CAIRO 18770 02 OF 02 111320Z

COULD IN OUR VIEW HAVE SERIOUS ADVERSE CONSEQUENCES FOR
THE PEACE PROCESS WAS THE RE-EMERGENCE OF ZIONISM-
RACISM. EGYPTIAN SUPPORT FOR A RESOLUTION ON THIS
INFLAMMATORY ISSUE WOULD SIMPLY NOT BE UNDERSTOOD BY THE
AMERICAN PUBLIC AND CONGRESS.)

3. ACCORDING TO BASHIR, EGYPT WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY
REQUEST THAT THE ARAB LEAGUE MINISTERIAL BE PUT OFF UNTIL
MID TO LATE SEPTEMBER, WHATEVER IT DECIDES TO DO ABOUT
THE SITE. SHOULD THE CAMP DAVID TALKS LAST FOR TEN DAYS
OR SO, THE EGYPTIAN PARTY WILL NEED TIME TO RETURN AND
PREPARE FOR THE ARAB LEAGUE MEETING. IN ADDITION, BASHIR
SAID, IT WOULD BE ABSURD FOR THE ARAB FOREIGN MINISTERS
TO MEET BEFORE THE RESULTS OF CAMP DAVID ARE KNOWN.
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